



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

# AMERICA IN CHINA: OUR POSITION AND OPPORTUNITY.

BY JOHN BARRETT, COMMISSIONER-GENERAL OF THE LOUISIANA  
PURCHASE EXPOSITION TO ASIA, AUSTRALIA AND THE PHILIP-  
PINES; FORMERLY UNITED STATES MINISTER TO SIAM.

---

AMERICA holds in China to-day a position of unprecedented strength and significance. Never in the first cycle of America's intercourse with Cathay has she been so much respected and trusted there. Never in the history of her foreign relations has there developed a more favorable opportunity abroad for the exercise of wholesome political influence, and for the furtherance of legitimate material interests. The secret of this position is not complex; in diplomacy America is implicitly trusted by China, because her diplomacy is that of truth; in commerce America is everywhere welcomed in China, because her commerce involves no territorial aggression.

This statement is not made in any spirit of American boasting. It is the expression of a fact that is evident to every student of Asian-American relations. It might be true of any other nation similarly located and inspired by like traditions.

Although the United States has been flooded from time to time with discussions of our interests in China, present and prospective, especially during the Boxer outbreak and the subsequent crisis at Peking, it is doubtful if now, in view of all the attention given to home politics and problems, the American people realize the importance of profiting by our new position in Asia. In the press of prosperity, it may be unnoticed that the remarkable conditions already described are incomparably favorable for extending our commerce and prestige where 500,000,000 people debouch on seas that lave our own Pacific shores, where a fallow area of 5,000,000 square miles is yet in the infancy of its material development,

and yet where already, with limited facilities and under adverse conditions, the annual foreign commerce exceeds \$1,000,000,000. These figures include not only China, but also Japan, Korea, Siam and neighboring foreign dependencies, although China is the centre of foreign effort and the field of greatest promise. It may be excusable to overlook the Orient when a strong flood-tide of home demand is running. On the other hand, when the ebb shall inevitably set in, our manufacturers and merchants who have neglected the Eastern markets, and our statesmen and economists who have minimized their importance and decried the Government's policy in China, will sorely regret that they did not favor competition and interest during the earlier and critical stages. There will be another illustration of hindsight proving clearer than foresight. For instance, American merchants are the only merchants who have not made creditable arrangements for representation at the great Oriental expositions to be held, respectively, at Hanoi, in Indo-China, this winter, and at Osaka, in Japan, in the spring of 1903. They say they are too busy at home. Another day when they are less busy they will find German, British, and other European houses, who are to take part on a large scale in these exhibitions, gaining by their neglect of the present opportunities. These industrial expositions will be the most elaborate ever undertaken in Asia. The French and Japanese Governments, under whose official auspices they are to be conducted, are leaving no stone unturned in the effort to make them successful in every respect. They will be visited and studied by native and foreign merchants from all parts of the Orient, and yet the American manufacturer says, "Never mind." In contrast, the attitude of Asiatic manufacturers, merchants and artisans towards our own great Louisiana Purchase Exposition to be held in 1904 is, fortunately, one of profound interest; and, as a result, Asia will take part therein on a measure surpassing all her previous efforts. In this comparison, the conservative Chinese appears as even more enterprising than the vaunted American hustler.

The circumstances and influences leading up to America's present unique position in China are interesting and instructive, even if they are not generally appreciated. From the time of the negotiation of our first treaties of commerce and amity with China, our record of fair dealing has been maintained without serious blot. The Chinese, in casting about now in their perplex-

ity to know whom they can trust, are studying history and learning the truth. From the first we have stood for the territorial integrity of the Empire, and for the extension of trade along legitimate lines. Above all things, we have not conspired to acquire territorial concessions, except those of limited area comprised within the original foreign settlements provided for in all the treaties with foreign countries, in the exercise of extra-territorial rights over nationals residing in designated ports. No matter what aspersions may be cast by jealous critics on our Chinese Exclusion Act, any representative Chinese official, scholar, or business man will say that this law is a mere bagatelle or incident compared to the forcible acquisition of China's territory by foreign nations. He will at once admit, even though he deprecates the legislation, that America has the sovereign right to exclude Chinese labor, but he will stoutly contend that no foreign nation has the right to deprive his country of its territory. He would prefer that America should restrict Chinese immigration forever, rather than strike at the life of his nation and the power of its Emperor by depriving it of one foot of its own dominion. Chinese exclusion may touch in a measure the personal pride of the Chinese, but wanton seizure of Chinese territory arouses at once whatever patriotic resentment there is in him. This is not an argument in support of, or an excuse for, our Exclusion Act, but a statement of its influence in our relations with China as compared with the influence of the policies of other nations. The Chinese Government is well aware that it is inspired by American economic conditions, and not by popular or official hostility to China.

Another significant agency that has developed Chinese confidence in America is the well-established belief, among the officials at Peking and the powerful Viceroys throughout the Empire, that America's diplomatic and consular representatives can be trusted for unselfish negotiations without ulterior or hidden purposes. It is a cause of deep satisfaction and pride to the American visiting China at the present time to note that our Minister and consuls are thoroughly respected by Chinese officials and merchants alike. The Wai Wu Pu, or Board of Foreign Affairs, at Peking, and the Viceroys and Governors of Provinces in which our consulates are located, have repeatedly learned from experience that American diplomacy is frank, direct, and forceful without buncombe. It is no exaggeration or self-assumption on the part of

American diplomatic and consular representation to contend that it was its influence with the great Yangtse Viceroys, Liu Kun Yi at Nanking, Chang Chih Tung at Wuchang, and the shrewd Governor of Shantung, Yuan Shih Kai, now the Viceroy of the Metropolitan Province of Chihli, which prevented the spread of the Boxer outbreak and the absolute wiping out of the Legations at Peking. Some European diplomats and many foreigners resident in the treaty ports smiled critically at the attitude of the American Minister and Special Commissioner during the negotiations at Peking which followed the insurrection, and stated that the Chinese would soon forget all such consideration on the part of the United States. Events that have occurred since the signing of the protocol indicate, on the contrary, that the Chinese statesmen not only have not forgotten our policy, but are striving to show their appreciation of it.

I do not base this conclusion merely on my own observations of the last few months, in which it has been my privilege to be brought into close contact with the highest officials of the Chinese Empire, but on the word of our Minister at Peking and of our consuls stationed throughout the land. Two recent illustrations of Chinese friendliness towards the United States can be cited as cases in point. First, in the facilities afforded the American railway syndicate for the construction of its railway concession from Canton to Hankow, and in the agreement to the wording of the concession in such terms that it can be successfully worked and carried to completion, the Chinese Government has acted in good faith. Second, in considering the question of creditable representation at the St. Louis World's Fair, and in preparing to make a comprehensive exhibit from all parts of the Empire, it has taken active steps in high circles never before characteristic of its interest in such an enterprise. There were certainly no indications of prearrangement or concerted action on the part of Viceroys Yuan Shih Kai, Liu Kun Yi, and Chang Chih Tung when they declared in unmistakable terms to the Commissioner of the Exposition, and to the American consuls who presented him, that they were most desirous of doing everything in their power to strengthen relations of commerce and friendship with the United States. These sentiments were earnestly expressed by them without the words in any way being put into their mouths by the American representatives. In the conversation which followed

the formal audience of presentation to the Throne at Peking, the Empress-Dowager departed from the ordinary platitudes of such occasions, and stated to the United States Minister and to the Exposition Commissioner that China deeply appreciated the attitude of the American Government during China's recent troubles, and desired that a special message to this effect should be conveyed to the President at Washington.

The endeavors of the United States to keep the indemnity at the lowest figure possible, and then finally its willingness to accept payment thereof on a silver basis; the efforts of Secretary Hay and Minister Conger, in response to the representations of Viceroy Yuan Shih Kai and Minister Wu Ting Fang, to secure the early evacuation of Tientsin by the foreign troops, and to bring the provisional government to an end; the readiness of the Administration at Washington to draw up the temporary tariff provided by the protocol, and to negotiate new treaties of commerce and amity more favorable alike to China and foreign countries, are all well known among Chinese officials from Peking to Canton, and from Shanghai to Chungking. The Viceroys, the Governors and their Secretaries discuss these features of American policy with a clearness that shows they are not forgotten. It is not intended to suggest here that America makes no mistake in her dealings with China, and that she has not a legitimate selfish interest to guard. By making as few mistakes, however, as could be expected under the trying circumstances, and by mingling with its care for American interests a sincere fairness which the Chinese have been quick to see and recognize, the Government at Washington has succeeded in placing the political, commercial, and missionary interests of the United States in a position of unprecedented strength.

Reference to missionary interests prompts me to advert to the exceptionally complimentary terms used towards them by responsible Chinese officials whom I have met. Without any initiative on my part, they volunteered the statement that the American missionaries as a whole are doing a good work, and are, in a Chinese sense, law-abiding foreign residents who undertake to support local Chinese administration. They said that American missionaries had been more reasonable and modest in their demands for indemnity than those of some other nationalities. While not generally favoring in principle the presence of missionaries in the interior, espec-

ally in remote sections, they admitted that they had fewer complaints against Americans than against others, and that they believed the American missionaries were striving to avoid trouble. In conversation with our diplomatic and consular representatives, I found the missionary situation to be summed up about as follows: the missionaries as a body are bending their energies unselfishly to accomplish the best results, but now and then in this and that place there will be one indiscreet man or woman whose acts and methods will do more to arouse native prejudice and feeling than all the others put together. It is said, moreover, that wherever there is a tactful missionary and a pro-foreign Chinese official, there will be no trouble whatever, but wherever there is a tactless missionary and an anti-foreign official, there will be trouble galore. In view of the rampant criticism of missionaries in the treaty ports, it is only fair to cite the statement of several high Chinese, that foreign merchants and the advancement by some of their Governments of the material spirit they represent had done China far more harm than all the missionary exploitation. Whether this is the truth or not, there is no question in the mind of the impartial observer that the time has come when only men and women of unquestionable qualifications should be allowed to go to China as missionaries.

Looking at the opportunity for our export trade in China, our business interests must bear in mind that the vast possibilities of Asiatic trade will not be realized in the immediate present or in the near future. Its growth will be slow and in some measure disappointing. The potentialities for a great demand and supply in China are almost limitless, but their practical value depends upon the facilities for exploiting them which do not now exist. The one chief developing influence required, in addition to the reform of government, is the construction of a network of railways throughout the interior. The dreams of the riches of Cathay will not be realized until the Empire is gridironed with railroads. The railway enterprises already inaugurated and the concessions granted for others are only a small part of what are needed. Throughout China's present area of 4,000,000 square miles, there are not yet 1,000 miles of railroads in active operation. There is not trackage equal to that of a single line from New York to Chicago. What this means can be best understood when we picture the United States as she was in material development

before the era of railways. These are absolutely necessary to carry the products of the foreign countries into the distant interior and bring the wealth thereof to the seaboard. Only with them can China's buying capacity be fostered. Only with them can her iron, coal, gold and silver, copper, tin, antimony and sulphur deposits, be turned into money. Railway construction will do more to make China a world power than the combined diplomacy of the allied nations.

The permanent nullification of the *likin*, or inland-barrier taxes, is now the chief topic of discussion in China. A treaty has recently been signed with Great Britain which calls for the abrogation of the *likin* and the increase, in lieu thereof, of the import tariff approximately from five per cent. to twelve per cent. If the other nations of Europe and the United States negotiate similar treaties, the Chinese Government will have an opportunity of proving its capability of carrying out its promises. The United States has not yet reached an agreement with China on this point, but the Government at Washington can be depended upon to do what is right. The President and the Secretary of State are in touch with the situation, and will take such steps as will protect American interests and be fair to China in this proposed radical change. The sentiment of American merchants residing in China is somewhat divided on the question of *likin* repeal. They are unanimously in favor of its abrogation only on condition that the Chinese Government will abolish it in fact. They are unwilling to consent to a horizontal increase of import duty unless they are convinced that the revocation will be final and lasting. There is no question that illimitable advantages will result from the unhampered shipment of products into the interior; but it is contended by many that, after securing a general increase in the tariff, the Chinese officials will still wink at an unofficial collection of the *likin*. Unprejudiced observers are inclined to believe that China should have a trial on this point. If her promises are carried out, a mighty change will be wrought for the benefit alike of China and foreign countries; if she fails to make good her assurances, it will be possible to return to the present average duty of five per cent. General T. S. Sharretts, the American Tariff Commissioner, who has just returned to America from China, is quoted as believing that the *likin* cannot be successfully abolished. His acknowledged standing as a tariff



expert entitles his views to careful consideration, but others, who have made a thorough study of Chinese conditions, argue that there will never be any marked growth in foreign trade with China until the *likin* is no more. It has been stated in America that our exporters are not interested in the *likin* question because the majority of our products sold in China, like cotton goods, find a market in districts of the north where no *likin* is imposed. This contention has been immediately met by the statement of Chinese officials that, if the *likin* is not abolished and a higher tariff negotiated in its place, it will be necessary to collect *likin* throughout all of China, including the northern provinces, in order to secure sufficient funds to pay the Boxer indemnity. The Chinese Government contends that an average duty of twelve per cent., following the abolition of the *likin*, is not high in comparison with the tariffs of Japan, the United States, and most of the countries of Europe, and that it is entitled, as a sovereign power, to determine the duties that shall be paid for imports and exports, provided they are not excessive or unreasonable. As the United States is described as residing in a glass house, so far as duties on foreign imports are concerned, the Chinese Government seems to expect its approval of the new system outlined. If this can be accomplished without infringement of the free list, which includes American flour, it is not improbable that a satisfactory solution of the problem will be reached.

There are a few influences at work in connection with America's position and opportunity in China that should be touched upon, even in brief terms, in the course of a discussion of this kind. The laying of the new Pacific cable and the construction of the Isthmian Canal will prove great incentives to the development of our commercial exchange with all Asia. When the cable is in working order and the canal is opened, we will wonder how we ever managed without them. The increase in the value of our trade that will surely come within a few years after their completion will more than pay their initial cost. Our occupation of the Philippine Islands gives us a commercial and strategic advantage which, though disputed by many, is believed by jealous European interests to provide us with an unrivalled opportunity to control the commerce of the Orient. The Philippines are the geographical centre of the resourceful coast-line which extends in and out for 8,000 miles from Vladivostok to Melbourne. Manila is cen-

tral to more important points on this line than any other port controlled by foreign governments, except Britain's post of empire and commerce—Hong Kong. The American papers are constantly referring to the immense cargo steamers that Mr. J. J. Hill is soon to place on the Pacific to ply between our western coast and Asiatic ports; the despatches describe the organization here and there of companies with large capital to carry on trade with China; and there are glowing accounts of a wonderful excursion and floating commercial exhibition which is soon to set sail from Seattle for the Orient. But there seems to be a neglect of the vital consideration that these merchant vessels must have return as well as outgoing cargoes in order to compete with the European fleets, that large dividends for new corporations will be slow in payment unless these companies are willing to remain long in the field and rest content at first with meagre profits, and that commercial exhibitions are of little account compared to the efforts of individual resident agents and branch houses of recognized standing and quality. A measure has recently been introduced into Congress appropriating a quarter of a million dollars for a permanent American exhibition at Shanghai; but, as the American-Asiatic Association of New York has pointed out, this scheme, aside from the unconstitutionality of a Government subsidy for such a purpose, is unpractical no matter how well intended and worthily espoused. A thousand times as much good could be accomplished if half this money were appropriated to provide our diplomatic and consular representatives in China with creditable offices and with sufficient clerical assistance.

Summed up in a word, the diplomatic position of the United States in China is one of which our people, whether interested directly or not, can be honestly proud, and her material and moral opportunity is one that is tempting in its possibilities. President Roosevelt, if we may judge from his public utterances and his messages to Congress, and Secretary Hay, if we may infer from the instructions he is issuing to our Minister and consuls, will maintain this position with satisfaction to the American nation. Upon the business interests and the churches of America is placed the task of developing the opportunity, and it is for them to determine whether the opportunity shall be improved or not—either to their immeasurable advantage on the one hand, or to their lasting loss on the other.

JOHN BARRETT.